

WE ARE THE KINGS CHILDREN

by Shlomo Katz

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Edited by Shlomo Katz

Contributing Editor: Daniel Dadusc

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Today's Learning:

Rosh Hashanah 2:5-6

Orach Chaim 318:6-8

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Nedarim 45

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Bava Kamma 2

At the beginning of the month of Elul, R' Chaim Halberstam of Sanz z"l (see page 4) would often relate the following parable to his chassidim:

A prince once sinned against his father the king, and was exiled from the palace. The prince began to wander, and, at first, he was shown great honor as befits royalty. However, as he went farther and farther from the palace, people no longer recognized him or paid any attention to him.

Eventually, the prince found himself on the verge of starvation, and he took a job as a shepherd. The job was easy and his needs were simple. However, the prince found that he was unable to construct a lean-to such as shepherds typically used to protect themselves from the rain.

One day, the prince heard that the king (his father) would be traveling through this distant province,

and that anyone who had a request could toss a note into the king's carriage. The prince wrote a note asking for help in constructing a lean-to, and he threw it straight into the king's lap as the royal carriage passed by.

The king recognized his son's handwriting and was pained greatly. Had the king's son fallen so far that all he could ask for from his father was help in constructing a humble lean-to? Had the prince forgotten the closeness that he once had to the king, and had he given up hope of restoring that closeness?

"We, too," concluded R' Chaim, "have forgotten that we are the King's children. When Hashem comes to hear our prayers during these Days of Mercy leading to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur come, we forget to ask Him to restore our former closeness to Him, and we instead focus on our relatively petty material needs." (Otzar Chaim: Minhagei Sanz p. 267)

"Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue, so that you will live and possess the Land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you." (16:20)

R' Shlomo Halberstam z"l (died Rosh Chodesh Av of this year; see page 4) explained this verse in light of two Talmudic passages.

First, the gemara (Bava Metzia 83a) relates that porters working for the sage Rabbah Bar Bar Chanah carelessly broke a barrel of his wine. Rabbah Bar Bar Chanah took the workers' coats as compensation, and the workers called him to a din Torah (a civil suit before a bet din). "Return the coats," the sage Rav ordered.

"Is that the law?" asked Rabbah Bar Bar Chanah.

"Yes," said Rav, "for it is written (Mishlei 2:20), 'in order that you may go in the way of the good'." [In other words, although Rabbah Bar Bar Chanah was not obligated by _civil_ law to return the coats, he was obligated by _moral_ law to be more forgiving than the law required (see Rashi).]

After Rabbah Bar Bar Chanah returned the coats, the porters complained, "We worked all day, and we were not paid."

"Pay them," Rav ordered.

"Is that the law?" asked Rabbah Bar Bar Chanah.

"Yes," said Rav, "for it is written (also in Mishlei 2:20), 'and keep the paths of the righteous'."

Another passage from Bava Metzia (30b) tells, "Rabbi Yochanan said, 'Yerushalayim was destroyed only because people insisted on enforcing their legal rights [without compassion]'."

Said R' Halberstam: From the first passage we learn that one's obligation to act in a more forgiving

manner than the law requires may sometimes cause a person to pay double (just as Rabbah Bar Bar Chanah had to absorb the loss of his wine _and_ pay the workers for their work). This is alluded to in the words, "Righteousness, righteousness (even twice!) shall you pursue." Only then, we learn from the second Talmudic passage, "You will live and possess the Land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you." However, if you do not act thus, then, G-d forbid, Yerushalayim will be destroyed and you will not possess the Land. (Quoted in Otzarei Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot p. 554)

"If a matter of judgment is hidden from you . . . You shall come to the Kohanim, the Levi'im, and to the judge who will be in those days; you shall inquire and they will tell you the word of judgment." (17:8-9)
Asks R' Yechezkel of Shiniva z"l (died 1899; eldest son of R' Chaim Halberstam; see page 4): why doesn't the verse say "you shall inquire _of them_ and they will tell you the word of judgment"? He answers:

Frequently, when someone comes to a sage to ask his advice, the seemingly "small talk" that the sage engages in contains the answer to the visitor's as yet unasked question. [R' Yechezkel records that this happened when he went to seek his father-in-law's advice on some matter. Similar stories were told by visitors to the Chafetz Chaim.] The verse means: You shall inquire _within your heart_ and you will realize that they have already told you the word of judgment. You may not have to ask! (Divrei Yechezkel)

Thirty Days before the Shemittah

[This coming year, 5761, is a shemittah / sabbatical year, and, from time-to-time, we will be presenting articles dealing with the laws and concepts of the shemittah. As with any halachic issue discussed in Hamaayan, our goal is to familiarize the reader with issues, not to give practical halachic advice. For such advice, consult a competent rabbi.]

The prohibition on working the land of Eretz Yisrael during the shemittah actually takes effect 30 days before the seventh year begins. The Sages added to this, and prohibited certain tasks beginning as early as Pesach of the sixth year.

However, the gemara (Moed Kattan 4a) teaches that all of the above applies only when the Bet Hamikdash is standing. Today, all agricultural work is permitted until Rosh Hashanah itself. (Ha'aretz U'mitzvotah p. 191)

R' Shlomo Halberstam z"l
(The "Bobover Rebbe")

Yesterday (Friday) marked 30 days since the passing of R' Shlomo Halberstam, the "Bobover Rebbe." Born in Bobov, Galicia on Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5668 / November 7, 1907, R' Halberstam was a descendant of R' Chaim Halberstam (1793-1876; the famed "Sanzer Rav"). His grandfather (R' Chaim's grandson; also named R' Shlomo Halberstam) was the founder of the Bobover dynasty.

Our subject's father, R' Ben-Zion, led the Bobover chassidim from 1905 until his murder near L'vov on 4 Av 5701 / 1941. Under R' Ben-Zion's leadership, Bobov chassidut was almost alone among chassidic groups in its focus on youth, and the network of 50(!) yeshivot which R' Ben-Zion founded recaptured the hearts and minds of thousands of youth who were left spiritually devastated by the first World War.

R' Shlomo Halberstam first entered public life in 1931, when his father left Bobov and moved to another town for five years. (R' Ben-Zion had reached the age at which his father had died, and he hoped that his self-imposed "exile" would change his "mazel." As for his staying away for five years, see Rashi to Bereishit 27:2.) At that time, the younger R' Halberstam was appointed Rabbi of Bobov and Rosh Yeshiva of its yeshiva. (Because of his years as the town's rabbi, R' Halberstam was referred to by his chassidim as the "Bobover Ruv.")

In addition to his father, R' Shlomo lost his wife and two children in the Holocaust. The story of his wanderings with his eldest son, R' Naftali Zvi (born 1931; the new Bobover Rebbe), and their miraculous survival is told in the book *Nor the Moon by Night* by Devora Gliksman [Feldheim 1997]. In 1984, R' Halberstam authored a kinnah / lamentation over the Holocaust, and he later said (as recorded in the Artscroll Tishah B'Av Service p. 384):

For years, I had wanted to express my grief over my personal loss and Klal Yisrael's [the Jewish People's] loss, but I hesitated. I felt that in order to compose a kinnah one must be on the exalted level of [the legendary liturgist] R' Elazar Hakalir, who wrote with Ruach Hakodesh [Divine inspiration]. Moreover, he was a master of kabbalistic secrets and knew the mystical incantations of the ministering angels. Still, many chassidim requested a vehicle to convey their personal sorrow on this bitter day [i.e., Tishah B'Av], but I held back, because I felt genuinely unworthy.

Then one day, I was studying the laws of Tishah B'Av in the book *Seder Hayom*, where the author writes:

Whoever can wail on this day should wail, and whoever can recite kinnot should recite kinnot - either those already recorded in the holy books or the kinnot he himself composed with the intellect G-d has granted him. It is a mitzvah for each and every individual to compose kinnot for weeping and moaning, and to recite them on this bitter day. One who does this is considered most righteous, and he is worthy of being described as one of Yerushalayim's mourners and one of her holy people.

Following the war, R' Halberstam first lived in Bari, Italy, where a small contingent of chassidim began to regroup around him. He eventually settled on the West Side of Manhattan, then in Crown Heights, and, after 1967, in Boro Park. Tens of thousands of chassidim gathered around him, and

large Bobover communities formed as well in London, Antwerp, Yerushalayim, Bat Yam (south of Tel Aviv) and Toronto. R' Halberstam's concern for his chassidim is illustrated by a story that his family heard repeatedly during shivah from widowed women who used to come to R' Halberstam for his advice and blessings. At the conclusion of interviews with such women, R' Halberstam would call a car service for them and would personally walk them out to the car. Later, he would call the women to be sure they had arrived home safely.

R' Halberstam was recognized as a profound Torah scholar; the Steipler Gaon said of him, for example, "The Bobover Rebbe is singular in this generation in his ability to explain pesukim and midrashim." He was beloved even outside of Bobov because of his warm personality and his avoidance of controversy. Regarding the former, the story is told of a long-haired man who walked-in on R' Halberstam's tisch, marched up to the head table, extended his hand, and announced, "Hi there, I'm Mike." R' Halberstam took Mike's hand and responded, "I'm Shloimie! How are you?" As for the latter trait, it was not lost on R' Halberstam's chassidim and those who eulogized him that he died on the yahrzeit of Aharon Hakohen, who is referred to in Avot (1:12) as "the lover of peace and pursuer of peace." (Sources: Encyclopedia Le'chachmei Galicia p. 539; Olat Shabbat Be'shabbato [Toronto], Vol. XIII, Nos. 46 & 48; Dr. S. Meth)

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